**Sunday, August 30th, 2020**

**1 Samuel 3:1-10**

The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli.

In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions.

One-night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see,

was lying down in his usual place.

The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down

in the house of the Lord, where the ark of God was.

Then the Lord called Samuel.

Samuel answered, "Here I am."

And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down."

So, he went and lay down.

Again, the Lord called, "Samuel!"

And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

“My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down.”

Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord:

The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.

A third time the Lord called, "Samuel!"

And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy.

So, Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you,

say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.' "

So, Samuel went and lay down in his place.

The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times,

“Samuel! Samuel!”

Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

The Word of the Lord.   **Thanks be to God.**

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A man was having difficulty communicating with his wife,

          and he concluded that she was becoming hard of hearing.

So, he decided to conduct a test without her knowing about it.

One evening he sat in a chair on the far side of the room.

Her back was to him and she could not see him.

Very quietly he whispered, “Can you hear me?”

          There was no response.

Moving a little closer, he asked again, “Can you hear me now?”

          Still no reply.

Quietly he edged closer and whispered the same words.

          But, again, there was no answer.

Finally, he moved right in behind her chair and said, “Can you hear me now?”

To his surprise and chagrin, she responded with irritation in her voice:

“For the fourth time, yes, I hear you!”

It wasn't his wife who had the hearing problem.

In the days of Samuel's time, the word of the Lord was rare.

And there were not many visions.

But perhaps the problem was not that God was not speaking to his people.

It was more likely that we are not always listening.

In those days there were not many visions.

Probably because the people were not looking.

They did not see God working in their lives, because they were not watching.

The book of 1st Samuel does not open with stories of major battles.

It does not start with tales of crisis in leadership.

This book begins with the story of a woman who had no children, she was barren.

Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah.

Peninnah had children.

But Hannah had none.

Hannah, the childless woman, turned to God in desperation.

In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly.

She made a vow, saying,

          “Lord Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery,

          and remember me, and give me a son,

          then I will dedicate him to you for all the days of his life.”

She kept praying to the Lord.

And the Lord heard her, blessed her, and granted her request.

The result was a little boy named Samuel.

When he was weaned, she presented him to the Lord,

          and he served with the priest Eli in the tabernacle.

While still a boy, Samuel heard God speak.

God called Samuel during the night, and kept calling him,

          until Eli realized the Lord was calling the boy.

The next time God called to Samuel, he sat up and paid attention.

He said to God, “Speak for your servant is listening.”

How pleased God must be when we pay attention;

          when we are willing to say:

          “Speak, your servant is listening,”

          and we really listen.

God had a task he wanted Samuel to perform.

But it was not an easy or pleasant job.

The Lord wanted Samuel to deliver a message to Eli.

God's message rebuked Eli, and criticized the wrongs he had done.

Samuel did as God asked, although the task was difficult and painful.

Samuel was only a boy, but God used him.

Imagine if we, like Samuel, could say:

          “Speak for your servant is listening,” and really listen.

Imagine the difference in the world if we performed the tasks God puts before us.

Our hearing problem is not that God is not speaking to us.

Our problem is that often we do not listen.

There once was a man who whispered, “God, speak to me.”

And a meadowlark sang.   But the man did not hear.

So the man yelled, “God, speak to me!”

And thunder rolled across the sky.   But the man did not listen.

The man looked around and said, “God, let me see you.”

And star shone brightly.    But he noticed it not.

The man then shouted, “God, show me a miracle.”

And a life was born.    But the man was unaware.

So, the man cried out in despair,

“Touch me, God, and let me know that you are here!”

Whereupon God reached down and touched the man.

But the man brushed the butterfly away, and walked on.

Communication is a two-way process:

          it involves speaking and listening.

If when we pray, we are doing all the talking,

          if our prayers are full of all our requests,

          and our feelings and hurts and questions,

          then we are missing out on a very important part of our prayers:

          the listening to what God has to say part.

God speaks to us in many ways:

          Through his creation which sustains us;

          Through his Word which he has given us;

          Through other people who encourage us;

          And through our relationship with him.

As we listen, and hear, and act, we change the world.

**AMEN**